

FAITHS VICTORY over NATVRE:

O R,

The unparallel'd president of an un-
naturally Religious Father;

*Delivered in a SERMON Preached at the
Funerall of the hopeful young Gentleman*

Master JOHN RUSHOUT,

Son and Heir to Master JOHN RUSHOUT
Merchant and Citizen of LONDON.

By NATH. HARDY Master of Arts, and Preacher
to the Parish of St. Dionis Back-Church.

*Was not Abraham our Father justified by works, when
he had offered Isaac his son upon the Altar?*

*Seest thou how faith wrought with his works and by
works was faith made perfect? J A M. 2. 21, 22.*

*Transgreditur fides rationis fidem, humanæ nature usum, experientia
terminos. Bern.*

*Verus obediens mandatum non procrastinat, sed statim parat: aures audi-
tui, lingua voci, pedes itineri, manus operi; & se totum intus colligit ut
mandatum peragat imperantis. Item.*

LONDON,

Printed by T. C. for Nathanael Webb and William Grantham,
at the Sign of the Black-Bear in St. Paul's Church-yard, near
the little North-door. 1658.

СИТИАН
УЯОТОЛ
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1800. 6.
in the X. and P. W. lines are at hand, and in X. v. b. b. 1.
and 1. (second). As far as made out, the first and the
8-81. 2000-2001. shillings.

To my Right Worthy F R I E N D ,
M^r JOHN RUSHOUT
Of L O N D O N Merchant, and Inha-
bitant in the Parish of St. Dionis
Back-Church, the blessings of the
throne and footstool.

Honoured S I R ,

 *T* was a sorrowful losse occasioned the delivery
of this Sermon in your care, and the seaso-
nable comfort you then found, caused those
desires which (being to me commands) oc-
asion the presenting of it to your eyes.

The tryal wherewith God hath been pleased to exercise
you, cannot but be grievous; yet a patient sufferance and
sanctified use will make it precious: no better means of
support under, and benefit by this tryal then faith, which
is both a powerful Antidote against the crosse, and a skil-
ful Alchymist to extract spiritual advantage out of tempo-
ral losses.

It is true, you have lost a hopeful son, but faith will eye
God as a wise and gracious Father. Charity comforts you
in the hope that he hath gained the enjoyment of glory by
his dissolution: Faith will instruct you in the Christian
art how to gain increase of grace by this affliction. It is
the justice of God that he never punishest without a cause,

The Epistle Dedicatory.

it is his mercy that he orders us to a good end, by re-pentance, and our hard bosom for so long, and Jacob will apprehend the benefit intended.

Oh divine grace of faith! many daughters have done worthily, but thou surmountest them all; thou regulatest our actions, and moderatest our passions, thou teachest us how to enjoy, and supplyest us in what we want; by thee we find the sweetmest of a God in the creature-comforts we have, and the sweetmest of those comforts we lose in a God.

And now, worthy Sir, what fitter counsel could I prescribe you then this of Faith? what fuller example of faiths energy could I set before you then that of Abraham, who by faith gave up that Isaac to God, whom God had committ'd on him in love. The picture of this believing Patriark, offering up his obedient Hand, you have delineated in the following Sermon.

Let Abraham's steps be your walk, and his before shall be your rest; imitate him as a sower in the grace of Faith, and you shall be an heir together with him in the grace of life, which is the prayer of him who is

Your devoted servant in all Christian

NATH. HARDY.

Imprimatur, Jas. Crawford.

On the death of Master John Rushout, eldest
Sonne of Master John Rushout of L O N D O N
A merchant.

Who slew all these? was Nimb's sonnes demand,
When's will was done by false *Samaria*'s hand;
When heads were heap'd, and Nobles (by the rude)
Were made the many-headed multitude:
When slain *Youth* and *Beauty* were heap'd on high,
Virtue and *strength* pil'd with *Nobility*.
Who slew all these? each tear now seems to say,
The mourner drops by this sad heap of clay.
Nor doe they sollicite, for in *Rushout's* sonne
There's an heap'd funeral, though he be but one.
Logick is out, it's prestepe erre in this,
He is but one, and yet a number is.
Aribmetick mistakes in him, for we
If not divide, yet one may multiply.
Virtue and *Beauty*, *Strength* and *Youth* are here
Heap'd up and pil'd together: on this Biere
A summe of *Graces* are; Hee's a *Totall* than,
Not one of these, but might compleat a man.
The tears that from his Fathers eyes doe run,
Fall for but one Sonne, and yet not for One.
When he laments his *Beauty* so soon gone,
Doth he not weep for his dead *Absolon*?
He mourns and praises his obedient *Will*,
'Tis for his *Isaac* sure those tears distill.
When he recounts the *Wisdom* of his Sonne,
And Sighs, fighs he not for his *Solomon*?
When how *religious*, and a tear lets fall,
Then sure he weeps at *Joseph's* funeral.
Absolon, *Isaac*, *Joseph*, *Solomon*,
Are all deceas'd in this his onely. *J O H N*.
Who slew all these then? not the barbarous hand,
Of forreign stranger, nor the dire command.

Of the Thieve's Captain, where the riddle's this,
Out-laws obey, and rape obedience is.
No death abroad, strange syze his breath supplies ;
He travels and lives, but returns and dies.
Thus have we seen the Pearl or Diamond stone
(Brought to the cooler, from the hotter Zone)
Escape the threats of th' Rocks, and th' Oceans fume,
And yet in th' Harbour have been lost at home ;
Having past the Pirates, and the watry way,
Made, or the *Customers*, or the *Thames* his prey.
Is this the welcome thy return'd Natives have,
O England ? entertainment in a *grave* ?
When to thy long'd for Soil thy Sonnes return,
Canst finde no lodging for them, but their *Urne* ?
When from strange Climates to their own they come,
Ha'st no home for them, but their longest *Home* ?
Fame calls thee *Eden*, if thou a *Garden* be,
'Tis such as *Joseph*'s; the *Sepulbre*'s in thee.
The terme's too good : since on thine own thou prey,
Wee'l change thy name, thou art *Acedama*.
Since now thy Bowels are with Funerals full,
Thou'rt or a *field of bloud*, or *place of Scull*.
Death dwels within thee, makes his Mansion here,
Hath ta'ne a Lease (we dread) for many year.
A *Lease* not made by *Law*, but *War* ; yet good,
'Caule seal'd with *Swords*, and written in our *bloud*.
Thus cruel art thou, and like to be ; yet He
Hath cause to thank thee for thy cruelty.
In thee he dy'd, but to thy Sins and fears ;
Thy Crown's of *Cypresse*, he a *Laurel* wears.
He rests in *Peace* secur'd from thy harms,
Hears glad *Hallelujah*'s, but thou *Alarms*.
The *Grave* and *Heaven*'s his *Aske*, whilst that the *flood*
Sweeps thee away, he floats above thy *Bloud*.
The *Grave* and *Heaven*'s his *House*, where he did *ly*,
And the destroying *Angel* passe him by.
Death leads to *Life*. He dy'd young, yet shall be,
A *Tenth* as long-liv'd as *Eternitie*.

J. THOMPSON.

1615.1.1.10.3.16.2.1.1.1.1



FAITHS VICTORY over NATVRE:

OR,

The unparallel'd president of an un-
naturally Religious Father.

HEBR. II. 17.

*By Faith ABRAHAM, when he was tryed, offered
up ISAAC.*

His Chapter after a brief yet full descri-
ption, presents us with a large and sin-
gular commendation of the grace of
faith: the excellency of this vertue is de-
monstrated by the efficacy, that in its
powerful effects we may behold its Divine nature.
Peruse the Chapter, and you shall find her honoured
as the mother of many graces, the spring of choice du-
ties; yea, the worker of strange Miracles. The truth
of all which our Apostle illustrates by various exam-
ples; since though positive doctrines declare what
faith can do, yet plain examples shew what faith
hath done: amongst many others we have the pres-
ident of Abraham, chief of the Patriarks, and Father of
the

the faithful set before us: if you cast your eyes upon the 11 verse, you shall there finde an eminent instance of his faith, *When he was called to goe out into a place which he shoulde after receive for inheritance, obeying, and he went out not knowing whither he went.* No easie matter, doubtlesse, for a man to part with his friends and live among strangers, to let go his present possessions for uncertain enjoyments, and become a voluntary exile from his own Countrey; sense derides it, reason contemns it, but faith obeys it. Nor doth his faith stay here: behold in the Text an harder task imposed upon, and performed by him; that was to leave his Countrey, this ~~was~~ to lose his Isaac; that was to sojourn in a strange Land, this to comitt a strange act; that to forsake his fathers house, this to forgoe his sons life: in that he sayled against the wind, in this against the wind and tyde: but the strength of faith carryed him through, enabling him to leave his countrey when called, and offer his Isaac when tryed.

By faith abraham, &c. &c. &c.

In the words we have these three observables;

- 1 A singular fact performed by Abraham, He offered up Isaac.
- 2 A special occasion moving him to it, when he was tryed.
- 3 A powerful cause enabling, & that was his Faith. Or if you please to take the words in their natural order, observe,

1. An act of God's wisedom, to wit, the tryall of Abraham.
- 2 An act of Abrahams obedience in offering up Isaac.
- 3 The principle inclining him to perform this obedience in reference to divine tryall, and that was his Faith.

Once

1003d Once more we have here considerable
bod The state and condition to which *Abraham* was
exposed, to wit, of temptation, when he was tryed.

ob 2 His suitable behaviour under that condition, in
obedience to that tryall, he offered up *Isaac*.

3 The true ground of that obedient behaviour, to
wit, his faith. According to each of these there are
three assertions our Apostle lays down in the words,

That *Abraham* was tryed; that being tryed he offered
up *Isaac*; that it was by faith he offered him up: and
of these in order.

1 The state of temptation to which *Abraham* was
exposed, when he was tryed. St. *Austine* speaking of the
life of man tells us, *Tota vita humana tentatio est*, every
mans life, but much more the Saints, is a continuall tri-
all; no day passeth over his head without some clouds;
& whiles he is in the sea of this world waves continu-
ally dash upon him: But yet there are some dayes in
the Calendar of his life which deserve, *Nigra carbone
nubes*, to be marked with a blacke coal, as more cloudy
then others: there are some storms wherein the waves
rage more vehemently, some times in which the Saint
is exposed to strange and stroog tryals; and of such a
one our Apostle here speaketh, *When he was tryed*.

2 But by whom is it that *Abraham* was tryed?

Quest. 1.
Answ.

The Hebrews have a tradition that the Divel ap-
peared to him in an Angelical form, and by many ar-
guments dissuaded him from sacrificing his son, as
being an unnatural and impious act, contrary to the
law of God and nature: nor is it improbable, that then
the Divel was very busie with *Abraham* by tempta-
tion to withdraw him from obedience to God's com-
mand, though the conceit of his visible appearing to

him is altogether uncertain; but this tryal whereof thy text speaks, is doubtlesse to be referred unto God himself: for so we finde it plainly mentioned in the history, *God tempted Abraham*, *Genes. 22. 1.* nor do *Moses* and *Saint James* herein contradict each other, when the one saith, *God tempted Abraham*, and the other *Chap. 1. 13. God tempteth no man*: but rather we must distinguish of a double tentation; the one *probationis*, the other *seductionis*, the one meerly of tryal for our good, the other of enticement for our hurt: this latter cannot agree to the pure and holy God, but is the Divels work, who goes about seeking to insnare and devour: the former as it stains not God's purity, so it sues well with his wisedom, which oft-times puts him upon making experiments of his servants, as here he did of *Abraham*.

Ques. 2.

But for what end, may some say, doth God tempt and try his people?

Answe.

I answer, for this double end.

1. Partly to disclose their corruptions, and discover those sins which were lurking in the heart. It is a common saying, *Magistratus indicat virum*; many men that were good, while confined to privacy, have proved licentious, when advanced to Magistracy; it's as true of tryals, wherein oft-times, there is an eruption of that corruption which one would not have imagined had lodged in their brests: for this end God proved *Hezekiah*, that the pride of his heart might appear, and the *Israelites* to humble them under the sense of those corruptions which troubles manifested to be in them. But,

2. Chiefly the end of tryall is a discovery of our graces; both their truth, & strength; their quality, and measure.

2 Chron. 32.

31.

Deut. 8. 2.

measure. Tryals shew what is the depth of our confidence, the breadth of our patience, the height of our love, and the length of our perseverance; observe but this tryal of *Abraham*, and you shall find what a many graces here were tryed and discovered; namely,
His faith, whether he would depend upon God's promise above, against reason.

His obedience, whether he would yield to God's command against nature.

His love, whether his affection was more enlarged toward his son or his God.

Finally, his fear, whether he did reverentially acknowledge and stand in awe of Divine Sovereignty. The truth is, *Apparet virtus arguiturque malis*: stars shine bright in the darkest nights; graces are manifest in the sharpest tryal; and for this end that our graces may appear, we are tryed, and they are exercised.

But what need is there that God should for these ends try his servants? Doth he not understand their thoughts long before? are not both their sins and graces open in his sight? it is a strange expression which God useth concerning himself in this tryal of *Abraham*. *Now I know that thou fearest God.*

Gen. 22. 12.

What did he not know before, who is Omniscent? yes, doubtlesse; but we must remember, it is usual with God, *Quod homini competit in se transferre*, to apply that to himself which belongs to men, and to speak of himself after the manner of men; but the truth is, God's end of tryal is not that he might know, but that we and others may know the graces of God that are in us: tryals are oft-times publishers of concealed virtues; neither the patience of *Job*, wisedom of *Solomon*, or the faith of *Abraham*, would have been so famous Chryllot. had it not been for tryals.

But

Quest. 4.

But how and by what meanes doth God try his servants?

Ans. w.

Divines answer two ways, *factis & verbis*, by deeds and words: by deeds, when either he substracts his grace from us, leaving us to our selves, as he did *Abraham*, *To try all that was in his heart*; or else when he brings us into straits, and lays upon us afflictions; so he was forty years in leading of the children of *Israel* through the wilderness, to prove them: sometimes by words and commands, which he enjoyns us; such was that command which Christ gave to the young man in the Gospel, *To sell all he had*; and this which he gave to *Abraham*, *Take thy son, and offer him for a burnt offering*; and if you please to take a serious view of this command, you shall find it was a sore tryall, and that there was a strange probation to this Divine precept: for consider,

1. Whom doth the command concern? not a servant, or a friend, or an allye, but a son; and him not an adopted, but a natural son; not of many but an only son by *Sarab*; one that was the son of his love, of his hope, yea, of his old age; a child of promise, of prayers; nay, tears.

2. What it is that is required? Is it to send him a far off into some strange Country? is it to part with him and not see his face for some years? is it to have him taken away by death, through some visitation of Gods hand? all of these would have been sad tryals: nay, but it is to lay violent hands upon him, and cut him off by an untimely slaughter: but whose hands must they be? may his servants carry him away to some remote place out of his sight, and there kill him? or is it only to stand by, look on, and suffer him to be slain? No, he him-

Luke 18. 22.

Gen. 22. 2.

himself must offer him up: *Abraham* must not onely have his eyes on, but his hands in this bloody act; he must not only be a spectator of, but an actor in this doleful Tragedy: the tender father must imbrue his hands in the bloud of his innocent child. God had tryed *Abraham* before many ways, calling him to gue out of his Countrey, suffering that contention between him and *Lot*, in the battel he had with the five Kings, in the circumcising of his houshold, in the casting out of *Ishmael*; but all short of this in sacrificing of his *Isaac*, which he was here put upon, and our Apostle means in these words, *When he was tryed*. To apply this.

Let the Servants of God learn continually to expect and prepare for tryals: let no son of *Abraham* hope to escape temptation, when he sees the bosome in which he desires to rest assaulted with difficulties; nor must we onely stand in fear of diabolical suggestions, but in

Use 1.

expectance of divine temptation; the truth is, tryals are both necessary and precious, needful and useful: Saint Peter joyns both together, *Ye are in heaviness, if need be, and the tryal of your faith being much more precious then that of gold.*

1 Pet. 1. 6, 7.

The shaking of the trees by the wind, the casting of gold into the fire, is not more useful for the试试 of the one, and purifying of the other, then tryals are for God's servants. Nor must we onely expect single but successive tryals, like *Job's* Messengers, one upon the neck of the other. When one woe is past, look for another to come, and that many times on a suddain, in matters we are least aware of: nor let us onely prepare for many, but great and sore tryals, such as will not onely rend our garments, but break our hearts; tryals in our nearest friends,

friends, dearest comforts, the delight of our eyes, joy of our hearts, and breath of our nostrils ; such were Job's, in his cattel, the support of his estate, his children, the fruit of his loyns, ; nay, in the wife of his bosome, and the smiting of his own body : such was *abraham's* in the Text, in his near and dear *Isaac*.

Since we must be tryed, look we to the soundness of our graces, that they be such as will abide tryall : paint will melt at the heat, while the natural complexion remains : drosse will consume in the fire while the gold grows purer : bad stiffe will shriek in the wetting, whilst that which is good retains its measure : finally, the house that is built upon the sand falls down at the blowing of the winde, while that which is built upon the rock abideth. Seeming grace vanishes in the times of tribulation, onely true grace retains its lustre, continues firm, nay, grows purer in fiery tryals. And since we must expect strong tryals, look we to the strength of our graces. *If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small*, saith Solomon, *Prov. 24. 10.* Adversity though it be a hard tyrant, yet it is a right Judge, speaking truly what our graces are. *Nemo vires suos in pace cognoscit*, no one knows his strength in peace : a sharp battle calls for courage in the sooldier ; hard weather makes the weak body shrink ; every cock-boat can swim in the river ; it's the lusty ship must layl in the Ocean : We meet with strong tryals, we must labour for strong graces, ever remembiring this for our comfort, that *Divine* wisdom and goodnesse will proportion the tryall to our strength. A skilful Physician in potions considers the strength of his patient ; a wise School master in his lessons observes the ability of his Scholar ; and our gracious

gracious God in his tryals remembers what we are, and will lay no heavier burthen on our shoulders then we are able to bear. That of the Apostle is in this sense truly applicable; he hath both *milk for babes*, and *meat for strong men*: and if he impose so great a tryal as the slaying of a son, it shall be upon an *Abraham* that is strong in faith, vigorous in grace, and knoweth how to obey so severe a command: which leads me to the

General, Abraham's obedient behaviour under his tryal, He offered up Isaac; God puts him upon it, and he sets about it, and having received an injunction, puts it in execution; *He offers up Isaac.*

But here some, perhaps, may tax our Apostle as a false relater of the story, since indeed *Isaac* was not offered up, but a *Ram*: the answer is easie.

He offered, that is, Offerre capit; he began to offer him; he had taken his journey, cleave the wood, and was come to the mount; being there, he had built an altar, laid the wood in order on that altar, bound and laid his son on that wood, stretched forth his hand, took the knife to slay his son; the knife was even at his throat, and nothing wanting but the last blow to have done execution: and so on *Abraham's* part there was no deficiency in fulfilling this probatory command of God.

He offered, that is, Voluntate jugulavit; he offered him in his intention and reading the will; *Immolatio Isaac ab animi affectu censetur;* his sacrificing of *Isaac* is reckoned not from the action but his affection: and

He offered him, that is, Interpretatio oblitus; in regard of God's account and esteem, that which was begun by *Abraham* is consummated in God's sight.

Fieri dicitur
quod tentatur
fieri. Rib.

Hier.

Calv.

Parens.

and his readinesse to sacrifice is interpreted as an actuall performance of it ; thus Parens upon the text, *obtulit ille hoc ostium, non falso quidem, sed prompta voluntate & obedientia, quam Deus acceptavit, & Scriptura celebret pro facto.* Abraham's willingnesse to offer his son is accepted with God, and is recorded in Scripture as if it had been really done : excellently Saint Chrysostom to this purpose, so far (saith he) as concerned the Father's will, he had already imbruad his hands in his sons bloud ; and therefore that Father brings in God commanding his ready performance of what he had enjoyned, *οὐ μή ἐπίστασθαι τοῦτο τοπεργενός, οὐδὲ οὐκονός διὰ τὴν ὑποτροφίαν, Τοῦτο διότι οὐδενός.* Thou didst not spare him at my command, I have spared him for thy obedience.

Chrysost.

To summe up this, it lets us see the gracious goodness of God, who is pleased to accept the will for the deed, and accounts what we would doe as if we had done it ; when we perform any duty, it is not *quid facti*, but *quo animo*, what we doe, but with what mind we doe it ; and as the action is never accepted without the affection, so sometimes the affection is regarded without the action : true it is, where God affords ability, and gives opportunity, he expecteth the expression of our will by the execution of the act ; but if either be denied (as here God sent his Angel to stay Abraham's hand, and many times he is pleased to withhold enablements to good duties) then he mercifully accepts our intention and endeavour : in this sense a poor man may be more charitable then the rich, according to that of our Saviour concerning the widow, *Verily this poor widow hath cast in more then all they that have cast into the treasury.* more for the manner, though less for the matter, not so much, yet with more alms-fulnesse,

Mark 12. 43.

fulness, and so it was more in God's estimation. In this regard a man that dieth in his bed, may yet be a Martyr in divine account, not *opere* but *voluntate*, real suffering but propense willingness to lay down his life if God had called him to it: finally, by this means it is, we fulfil that command of our Saviour, *in taking up the cross daily*, that is, *semper animum habere paratum*, ^{Luke 9. 21.} *Stetit.* being in a daily readiness to bear whatsoever cross it shall seem good to Divine wisdom to inflict upon us.

It is that which may yield abundant comfort to *Uſe.* weak Saints, and tender consciences, who are oft-times sadly perplexed at the non-performance of those duties; the omission wherof is caused, not through want of will but power: surely what the Apostle faith, in the point of charity, is true in regard of all other services. *If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, not according to that a man hath not.* ^{2 Cor. 8. 12.} I would not have profane careless sinners encourage themselves from this comfortable Doctrine, who pretend to good desires, whilst they improve not the opportunity and ability God puts into their hands of doing good; and which is worse, please themselves in the vain excuse of their good meanings, whilst they impenitently go on in evil wayes: such lazie desires will be no sufficient plea at God's bar, and they will find that usual maxime true too late, *Hell is full of good wishes, Heaven of good works.* But as for weak Christians, who doe what they can, and would doe what they cannot, let them take comfort in this meditation, that the sincerity of their intention shall be regarded, and rewarded by God. It was the complaint of holy Paul, concerning himselfe, *when I would do good evil is present with me, so that he good* ^{Rom. 7.18,19.} *is ready*

good I would doe, I doe not; and the evil I would not doe, that I doe. And surely if he, well may we have cause of taking up the same complaint; but though we complain, yet let us not despair. It is observable what a candid interpretation our Saviour makes of his Disciples sleep in the midst of his agony, excusing it as a fault arising only from the weakness of their flesh, not defect of their will; *the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*; and it is his gracious promise not to quench the smoaking flax, nor break the bruised reed. Know then, oh thou dejected soul; though thou canst offer nothing to God but a Turtle, that is, *gemitus*, a sound of sorrow, that thou canst doe no better, or a pair of Pigeons, that is, well wishing, a desire to do good, God will accept and account of thy will as the work: It was so with *Abraham*, whose reall intention of offering was esteemed, and is registered as an actual execution, *He offered up Isaac*. To let this go,

That which is principally observable in these words, is the nature and strength of *Abraham's* obedience. God imposes a strange command upon him, he denys not, delays not his obedience; he doth not consult with flesh & bloud, hearkens not to natural affection, acquaints not the wife of his bosome with his intention, but obsequitiously follows divine injunction; he well knew, that though he were *Isaac's* father, yet he was God's servant; and though his love as a father would have diverted him from the slaughter, yet his duty as a servant engaged him to the sacrifice of his son: his son was dear to him, but grace was stronger; *τὸν πότερον τὸν τελευταῖον διατίθειν τὸν πατρὸν τὸν καλλίστον τὸν δικαίατον*: he casts away all natural, and embraceth divine love; he trampleth upon fatherly

fatherly bowels, and resists not his Fathers call. Thus he became obedient, though against his will ; yet with his will, in the sacrifice of his Son ; one will sacrificed another, his spiritual will to serve his God, overcame his natural will to save his child : and so he set upon this unnatural work of offering up Isaac.

One would have thought that in so neer a tryall, so harsh a command Abraham through frailty might have replyed against God with murmuring, as those Israetites did upon a leſſe occasion when they wanted food, *Would God we had dyed in the Wilderness*, Exod. 16. 3. flesh and bloud would have broke out into these or the like expressions. *What, Lord? didſt thou mock me with thy gift, that ſo ſoon thou takeſt him away, nay com- mandeſt me to throw him away? would thou never hadſt be- flown a ſon upon me, rather then ſo ſodainly to ſnatch a ſon from me? why didſt thou make me a father, iſ now I muſt be- come a muſtherer of my child? & far better I had been child- leſs, then now to make my ſelf ſo.* But far be ſuch thoughts from Abraham, who had learned this ſacred leſſon, not to murmur but to obey; had it been any but an Abraham, he would doubtleſſe have returned an excuse and ſaid (to use Naaman's words) *In this the Lord par- don his ſervant, any thing but my Isaac, thou ſhalt com- mand, him I cannoſt, know not how to part with;* how- ever it might ſeem no more then juſt for Abraham in this caſe to expouſtulate with God in these or the like words, *Doth the God of mercy delight in cruelty, and piety it ſelf command muſther? will juſtice require the ſlaughter of an innocent, and canſt thou in equity deſire the bloud of the guiltleſſe? & or if thou wiſt needs haue an humaue ſacrifice, is none but Iſaac fit for thine Altar, and muſt none offer him but Abraham? Shall thine hands deſtroy the fruit*

fruit of my loyns? must I that was the instrument of his life, become the means of his death? Cannot I be faithful unto thee, unless I be unnatural to my child? Why did I so long wait for him? Why didst thou at last bestow him, if I must now part with him? How shall I look Sarah in the face when I have slain her son? How will the Heavens censure this holy cruelty, and say, there goes the man who cut the throat of his own child? But Abraham's obedience had taught him better, not to dispute but act: methinks, I hear him answering God's command in these or the like submissive terms, *Blessed Lord, dost thou call for my Isaac, thou shall have him;* what though he be precious in my eyes, yet thou art more: true, he is my son, but thou art my God: to me it will prove a bitter losse, I, but to thee it will become a sweet sacrifice: what though my wife may blame me, yet thou commandest me: better she call me a bloudy husband, than thou an unadvisable servant? What though the world accuse me of cruelty, yet thou requirest it as a duty: better I be in their eyes an unnatural father, than in thine an ungracious son: were he ten thousand Isaacs, I dare not, I will not spare him, but am ready, though against my own, to do thy will, o' God. But here a farther doubt may be moved, how Abraham though he would, could offer Isaac: Abraham was old, and feeble, Isaac young and lusty; though one had a command of offering, yet the other none of suffering, and the law of nature would teach Isaac to endeavour the preservation of his life, though a father came to take it from him. To this Divines answer, that Isaac being religiously educated, and no doubt by his father sufficiently informed of God's will in this particular, submitted himself to be offered up. Suitable to this purpose is that of Saint Chrysostom, *if human nature,*

Illustration 11: Isaac's answer to Abraham.

Isaac gave himself to his Father, as freely as Abraham gave him to God. Whom shall I first admire, to whom shall I give the greatest honour, the tender father that offered his son, or the obedient son submitting to his father, even to the death? Thus there was the same mind, the like affection both in Abraham and Isaac; so that the courage of the Father seemed to be transplanted into the son, and the innocence of the son not wanting unto the father. That golden-mouthed Orator illustrateth this, whilst he fitly bringeth in Abraham thus be-speaking his son; *Suffer me, o my son, suffer me to perform the command of my God; that God that made thee, calls for thee; he that gave thee, seeks thee: he that created thee, desires thee shouldest be sacrificed to him; thou will be a sacrifice so much the more acceptable: by how much the more willingly thou entertainest the glorious benefits of death; and then Isaac sweetly complying with his fathers desire, *My father, perform what thou art commanded, doest thou offend thou art enjoyned, I refuse not, refuse not: what thou will I will; what thou desirest I submit to; and with the same readiness I embrace death, as I know thou doest by Gods command infil'd it.* See here a rare pattern of obedience to parents in Isaac, who suffered Abraham, to God in Abraham, who offered up Isaac. This latter is especially presented in the Text, and ought principally to be imitated by us; and though we cannot attain, yet let us aspire to that height of obedience which Abraham practiced: indeed, herein is the tryal of our submissiōn, when in things contrary to our nature, contradictory to our desires, crosses our reason, we can obey God; it is the aggravation of disobedience in refusing to obey him.*

cepts to rebel, it is the commendation of obedience in difficult commands to submit : to obey God in what suits with our temper is not praise worthy; but then to yield, when nature & reason oppose, is most laudable. Indeed *bis labor, hoc opus*; to strive against the stream, row against the tyde, gongainst the hair, act against the dictates of our own natural and carnal affections, is the difficulty, and withal the excellency of obedience.

To close up this in a three-fold spezial application:

1. Though God call not upon us to offer up our sons, yet he requires us to offer up our sins ; there is none of us but in this sense hath an *Isaac*, a *dilectione delictum*, some darling lust, bosome corruption, which he expects we should part with at his call : but alas how far short are we of this *Patriark*? he offered up a dutiful *Isaac*, we will not sacrifice a rebellious lust; he at a single command went about the work, we neglect after many precepts, often intreaties, and frequent threatenings ; he rose early in the morning to slay his son, we make it our evening sacrifice, and scarce think of mortifying our lusts, till death is ready to kill us : Finally, he would have sacrific'd his son, in whom all Nations were to be blest, we will not slay our sins, which otherwise will make us for ever curs'd : but a sinner, how long will thou hug that in thy bosome which is God's hate and will be thy ruine; think thou hearest a voice from heaven once more be-speak thee as God did *Abraham*, *Take now thine Isaac whom thou lovest, thy sin wherein thou delightest, and offer it up for me, for sacrifice* : or as Christ did the Jews, *Let go my enemies (thy lusts) which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me*. O then delay not, consult not, neglect not, but while it is called

called to day, binde thy corruptions on the Altar of the Law, take the knife of God's Word in thy hand, and cut the throat of thy sins, that they may become a sweet smelling Sacrifice in God's nostrils, and thou an amiable Priest in his eyes.

2. Though God do not call us as he did *Abraham*, to offer up our children, yet he sometimes requires us to neglect both children and parents, and all natural relations for his sake; and surely in such a case, *Pietas est impium esse pro Domino*, it is piety towards God to be unnatural to our friends: our blessed Saviour hath told us, *He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me*, Mat. 10. 37. Another Evangelist uses a more harsh expression, *He that cometh to me and hateth not all these*: strange that love it self should require hatred, but yet just, not in an absolute but comparative sense: we must not love father or mother more than him; yea, when their desires come in competition with his will, we must hate them for him; we must say as *Lewi, nescio vos*, I know you not, or with Christ to his mother, *quid mihi tecum? woman, what have I to do with thee?* trampling under foot all natural relations, which would hinder us from obedience to divine injunctions. It was a pious (though erroneous) spirit that lodged in the breast of Sir *Thomas Moore*, once Lord Chancellour of this Kingdom, who regarded not the prayers, nay tears, of his dearest wife, when she persuaded him with the forfeiture of his conscience to endeavour the restoration of his liberty: let us follow his pattern, that no respect either to wives or children may withdraw us from the performance of our duties to God.

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Luke 14. 22.

3 Finally, though God do not call us to offer up our children, yet many times he calls us to part with them; though not to sacrifice them with our own hands, yet to resign them up to his dispose: oh let us learn by Abraham's example, cheerfully to give up our dearest comforts to that God who hath given them unto us; he was willing to an ~~obstinate~~, so far obedient as himself to offer his son; shall not we be content with an ~~obstinate~~ that God should take away wife or children, or any enjoyment from us? good old Eli, when acquainted by Samuel with God's severe intentions against himself, his sons, his family, sits down quietly and says

1 Sam. 3. 18. *Yubmisiively, Domini est, it is the Lord, let him do what it seems good in his sight.* Holy Job, when informed by several messengers of the loss of his Oxen by the ~~stealers~~, of his Camels by the ~~thieves~~, of his sheep and servants by a fire from God, & ~~any~~ of his sons and daughters by a wind from the wilderness, worshipped, saying, *Domini deus, The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.* Oh let us write after these copies, and what we daily pray for, cheerfully, submit unto that the will of the Lord may be done; let all parents say, to use the Prophets words, though in another case, *Behold, I and the children whom thou, & Lord, hast given me, are ready ~~to~~ to suffer with me and mine as it pleaseth thee.* And that we attain this gracious frame of spirit, let us take notice of, and strive after that grace of faith wherein Abraham excelled, and by which he was enabled to so difficult a work: which leads me to the

1² General, namely, *the true ground of Abraham's obedient behaviour in those words by Job 13. in truth nothing but faith could enable him to quite Mansfield so*

so great a trial. I deny not but even Heathens have sacrificed themselves and their children unto death, but upon what grounds? for the most part affection of vain glory, at the best, but love of their Country, was that which bereaved them of their lives. *Abraham's* suffering up his *Isaac* was upon another ground, in a religious observance of divine precept, to which nothing but faith could enable: the truth is, if we rightly weigh this act of *Abraham*, we shall find there was great need of faith to unlock the difficulties, silence the remonstrings, and answer the doubts which could not but arise in his spirit.

There was a double objection which this Patriarch might make against offering up his son, to both which only faith could give an answer.

The one in respect to the command which God gave: The other in respect of the promise which God made.

Besides the law of nature God hath given an express command, That ~~man~~ not kill, and well might ~~man~~

traordinary precepts; the ten Commandments are the general rule of our life, yet if a special intervene, as here did to *Abraham*, faith gives that the preheminence.

3 Another objection might well arise from God's promise; God hath assured *Abraham* of an innumerable seed, as the stars of heaven, and the sands on the sea shore, all these to come out of *Isaac's* loyns; and yet God commands that *Isaac* should be slain. Might not *Abraham* well have reasoned thus, *What, Lord, are thy decrees changeable, or thy promise failable? how can those two stand together, Isaac shall be a father of many nations, and yet he must die by his fathers hands? what fruit is to be expected from a dry root, or what hopes can there be in a dead Isaac?* the truth is to sense and reason, there is a manifest contrariety between his precept and his promise; neither of these eyes can see how God should fulfil what he had promised if *Abraham* perform'd what he required; but faith hath a piercing sight, lo, she steps in, untyes the knot, and thus bespeaks *Abraham*, *Fear not Abraham to sacrifice thy son, he that commands thee to kill him, wants not power to quicken him; the same hand which raised him from the dead womb of Sarah, can revive him from the ashes of a sacrifice; then givest thy Isaac by believing, thou shalt not lose him by obeying.* Now faith hath got the day, obtained the victory. What cruelty doth in others, that faith did in *Abraham*, makes him not to be moved at the strangeness of the fact: God knew he had to doe with an *Abraham*, & therefore puts upon him such a command; *Abraham* knew he had to doe with a God, and therefore believes what he commands is good, and what he promises is infallible. Thus being careless of the means, not doubting of the end, he sets upon the work, and by faith offers up *Isaac*.

Briefly,

τίτος ιμάχε
το τίτος ι
προσταγμα
ιταγγελια.
Chrysost.

Briefly, faith wrought in *Abraham* a double effect, which inclined him to offer up *Isaac*.

The one, a dependance on Gods will.

The other, a submission to Gods power.

The one, confidence on Godstruth in promising.

The other, reverence of Gods Majestie in commanding.

In regard of the promise it assured him God was able to raise up *Isaac* from the dead, as it is *Verse 19th*, that notwithstanding all seeming contrarieties, and though hee saw no way of accomplishment, divine power could act above, against means, and so he believeth above and beyond hope.

In reference to his command, it perswaderth him this was Gods will to which he must subscribe, that the Almighty was his sovereign Lord to dispose of him and his how hee pleased, and therefore ought to be obeyed.

Thus being confident of Gods ability and fidelity in making good his word, being resolved to exalt Gods will above his own, hee readily performeth his duty, *and by faith when he was tryed, offered up Isaac.*

To shut it up in a brief application, learn we all to prize the worth, and endeavour for the growth of this grace of faith: we know not what tryals God may call us, but alas, how shall we bear them if not supported by faith: its faith is the only weapon to resist Satans temptations, and the best staffe to hold us up under divine tryals: this grace of faith, as it is of singular worth, so of universall use, in prosperity it teacheth us how to use comforts, in aduersity how to want them, without this, we can neither do what is enjoyed, nor beare what is inflicted upon them let our care be with all our

our getting togethers, &c. in odious to get but strength then faith, since its strong faith gives us strong support in strong tryals; and in particular, that wee may with *Abraham*, in some sense offer up our *Isaac*, resigne our children, yea all earthly comforts with cheerfulness, when he tryes us on them, and calls for them from us, let us pray with the Apostles, *Lord increase our faith*: true it is, a naturall man when he sees there is no possibility of enjoyment, may be contented to want, just like a man who in apparent danger of the ship, will a willing willingness and most content casts his goods into the sea; but its only the believing Saint who makes a free and full resignation of himself, and comforts into Gods hand. There is a four-fold element which faith contributes to this difficult duty of offering up our *Isaac*, parting with our dearest comforts when God calls.

1 It acknowledgeth God's Sovereignty over all, and teacheth the soule to say, my slave, my friend, my children, my selfe, are not my own but God's, *who may do with his own what he will*, two and a half lines.

2 It confesseth the inconstancy of all worldly enjoyments, and lets us see upon what uncertain terms we hold creature comforts, being only tenants at the will of the Lord, of whatsoever we possesse there is leave those that have to be as the selleres possessed not, to rejoyce at those that enjoyed not; and those that have never had children, & shoud they bid now, continually expecting to be bereaved of them, and that is every

1 Cor. 7.29,30.

is no better way to retain a comfort than in a faithful consciousness to surrender it up to God, with all *Abraham* in the text, he offers, and God spares his *Isaac*.

4. It convinces us of God's All-sufficiency, presents him to the soul as an universal good, finding all losses to be made up in him alone: what we can be fuktur out of any or all the creatures below; that, and more doth faith find in the God above, as *Paul* *Anselm* said to *Achilles*.

Abrahams in a picture upon his tomb, in the church of *St. Domingo*, to this effect: *tu sis in nobis domino*.

Thou art Lord, brother, husband, children, also me. Thus will faith draw strength from God to support us under, and carry us through the saddest tryals. That therefore we may answer when God calls, obey when he commands, resign when he requires, and be found blameless in the day of tryal: let our care be in all exigencies to quicken faith, so shall we walk in the steps of faithful *Abraham* now, and after the cheerful endurance of tryals for a time, we shall rest in the bosome of *Abraham* for ever, finding that glorious promise fully verified. *Blessed is the man that overcometh temptation: for when he is tryed he shall receive the crown of life,* which the Lord hath promised to them that *love him.*

To endall, with one word of advice say you the father of this son, whom God hath pleased immorally (I hope) to take away; *I may truly affirme, God hath bereaved you of your *Isaac*, one who had learnt with *Isaac* obedience to you, no small virtue in children, especially when grown up to years, (since it too often falls out that they come no sooner to know themselves,*

1 Sam. 1. 6.

selves, but they forget their parents) one in whom you had much comfort, on whom you had placed singular affection, of whom you and all that knew him had great hopes ; his natural endowments, ingenuous education, skill in varietie of Languages, modest and civil behaviour, promising in future time abundant fruit : but this tree God hath cut downe be-times, and in charity (we may hope) transplanted to his own paradise ; but, doubtlesse, it is no small losse to the Garden of your Family, and cannot but be a sore tryal of your patience: that therefore you may be comforted, look on *Abraham*, and let his practice be the matter of your imitation. Your tryal in a double respect falls short of his ; his was an only son, you have one yet surviving : he was to be executioner of his own son, but it is divine providence which by a sad accident hastned your sons death: since then your losse is lesse then his, let your submission be equal with his, and if you cannot keep even pace with him yet be sure to follow him in those steps of faith and obedience, which he took : remember your son is not *amissus*, but *promissus*, lost but sent before you, whither one day you and we must all must follow. In the mean time, think that God saith to you, at *Elizur* he said to *Hamul*, why weep of this, and why is thy heart grieved, am not I better to thee then ten sons ? O then let grace over-rule nature, faith supprest passion : and though you cannot but shew your self a tender father towards him, yet still behave your selfe as a son of *Abraham*, who by faith when he was tryed, offered up *Isaac*.

227/71
227/71